



A STUDY ON GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BODY DISSATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

People often correlates the gender and the body (or sex) as a person's identity. However, it is not true in every aspect as the body is referred to the biological physical variance whereas the gender is how an individual is being identified. This study reveals the perspectives of youth between the ages of 15 to 25 concerning the gender and body image. This study was undertaken using open-ended questionnaire with a sample of 60 persons, half of which were men and half were women. Equal number of men and women having ectomorphic, endomorphic and mesomorphic body types were taken as sample. It was found that both adolescents and young adults with different body types were obsessed with their bodies. Individuals having mesomorphic physique reported positive reviews about their body, whereas endomorphic and ectomorphic body types reported pessimistic evaluation with respect to their body image. Body dissatisfaction was rational across the gender. Most of the women wants an ideal body like a Barbie doll with slim waist and other signifiers of sexiness. Whilst men wants the body like an WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) action figure with massive set of muscles in the upper torso, 'six packs' of abdominal muscles and leanness with muscularity. In addition to this, young adults believes that ideal body image can help them achieve more social success and acceptance. Therefore, providing proper guidance to these youngsters regarding healthy body and gender stereotypes can have a positive impact on their mental health and can improve their self worth.

KEYWORDS: Gender and Body, Obsessed, Ectomorphic, Endomorphic, Mesomorphic, Body Dissatisfaction, Muscularity, Mental Health.

INTRODUCTION

Body image perception is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct which encompasses a cognitive-affective component involving cognitions, attitudes and feelings towards one's body. The importance of appearance is connected to the cognitive-affective and the behavioural component which gives the consideration to cognitive-behavioural relinquishment in individual's appearance as a form of importance people set on their appearance. This specific evaluation reflects the estimate of body satisfaction/dissatisfaction among youngsters. An individual's gender is how they identify internally or how they express this externally. People may use clothing appearances and behaviours to express the gender that they identify with.

According to American Psychological Association (APA), body image is the mental picture one forms of one's body as a whole, including its physical characteristics and one's attitudes towards these characteristics. Basically it is how you see yourself, how you feel about yourself and your body. These days body image has become one of the major concern among youngsters, but this is a significant issue throughout lifetime of an individual. Body image perception of a young adult is also a crucial part of his/her self worth and sexual identity. Cash(2004) reported that one-third of people's self esteem is directly proportional to their optimistic and pessimistic body image perceptions.

Adolescence represents a principal stage in the development of positive or negative body image. Many influences exist during the teen years including transitions (eg, puberty) that affect one's body shape, weight status, and appearance. Chief influences on body image include the social media, which can target adolescents and youngsters who help shape beliefs about the ideal body physique. The concepts of plump gossip and weight-related bullying during adolescence greatly contribute to prominence on body weight and appearance as well as the development of negative body perceptions and dissatisfaction of specific body parts.

Considering body-image, becomes critical due to the prestige it holds for people in the go-ahead era. It holds the prospective to perilously influence self concept of people and, therefore, their quality of life (Goldfein, 1994). From childhood onwards it affects emotions, thoughts and behaviours in everyday life. Its affect is most crucial on relationships, public as well as most intimate (Frost, 2004). Adults can also develop a negative body image, especially if they're prone to comparing themselves to others and feel pressure to meet socially prescribed beauty standards.

Methodology

In an attempt to understand body image issues in adolescents and their relationship with self- beliefs, in the current research, self report questionnaire was used. A qualitative analysis was done for the data collected in order to explore the issue.

Sample

The questionnaire was administered on a total of 60 young adults in the age group of 15-25 years. The half of these youngsters were males and half were females with endomorphic, ectomorphic and mesomorphic body types. Some of them were students of school and college while some of them were working. Different types of body physiques were taken as sample in order to analyse the differences across gender.

Sub-groups in the study	No. of female participants	No. of male participants
Endomorphic body type	10	10
Ectomorphic body type	10	10
Mesomorphic body type	10	10

Tool

A self structured questionnaire was undertaken to understand the concept of body image perception varied across gender. This specific study demands open-ended questionnaire so that participants can provide self report answers. Moreover, some reckoning questions in defiance of socially desirable answers were also included. The questionnaire examine the following trends with reference to ideal body image, attitudes towards different body types, perception of body image of opposite sex, physical characteristics and weight along with major body satisfaction concerns of youngsters. There were also questions regarding their self-concept and self-worth.

Research findings and discussion

All the participating youngsters were superconscious reckoning their body image. Both men and women showed dissatisfaction with regards to their special body parts. Body image satisfaction became very crucial for the young adults as they are more concerned about their physical appearance and the opposite sex as well. In contradiction with sought-after beliefs considering the adolescence age, male participants were equally dissatisfied with their bodies as females. Negative perceptions of their body image are proportional to the low self worth, shame, embarrassment, and low self confidence (Sharma S,2017).

Nearly 98% of the males reported that they desire an action figure body like wrestlers of World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) with gigantic set of muscles in their upper frame of body. In addition to this, they want huge biceps and triceps with perfect 'six packs' of their abdominal muscles. Each one of the male participants disclosed that they want a V-shaped body in order to look more attractive and acceptable by the opposite sex. Almost 80% of the boys wants a height of 183 cm and above whereas remaining 20% of the boys wish for the 170 cm and above height. Considering skin tone, 60% of the males wished for fair complexion and the remaining wants medium complexion skin in view of the fact that with fairer skin they will appear more feminine than masculine.

Adolescence is the age where physical appearance matters more to the people as

they seek acceptance from the opposite sex. Practically, all the female respondents' view point regarding males was similar. The preference for large biceps and triceps was detected across the gender. Female participants also shown inclination towards a V-shaped body of males as they found males with large biceps and triceps more attractive.

The table depicts the perception of boy's about boys and girl's about boys of specific body parts.

Items	Boy's opinion about boys (%)	Girl's opinion about Girls (%)
1. Abdominal muscles		
Six packs	87	59
Slim	7	23
Normal	6	18
2. Biceps and Triceps		
Massive	99	95
Medium	1	4
Normal	None	None
3. Chest		
Large expressed	92	66
Medium	7	30
Normal	1	4
4. Skin tone		
Fair	60	80
Medium	40	20
Dark	None	None
5. Height		
165-170cm	22	14
173-183 cm	37	30
193cm and above	41	56

As per previous researches, females of all the age groups were concerned toward their body image because they strive for social acceptance throughout their lives. Adolescent girls try to obtain an ideal body like a barbie doll with large breasts and hips, slim waist, long legs and other forms of eroticism. Most of the females reported that they desire for long height with fair skin tone in order to become more pleasing and tempting.

For men, attraction is over 85% physical. And beauty standards exist because of reproductive strategies, meaning that healthier and younger looking females are more attractive because men perceive them as more apt to reproduce. More fat is a clear indicator of less health. On the same line a certain ratio of waist/hips is also perceived as healthier, just as symmetrical face features. Nearly 80% of the boys finds a girl pleasing if they have a slim waist with large breasts and round hips with fair skin complexion. The similar findings were also reflected in the research of Cash & Pruzinsky(2004) and Sharma S(2017).

Self-esteem is the attitude toward oneself and can act as a pointer toward mental well-being. Hence, in adolescence as compared to any other age group, the presence self-esteem is highly linked to the physical appearance. These perceptions affect their self-evaluation which emerges as the single strongest indicator toward their self-esteem (George M,2020). Adolescents with a negative body image concerns are also more likely to have psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies than those without dissatisfaction over their appearance.

The table shows the point of view of boys and girls about girls' body and specific parts.

Items	Girl's opinion for girls' body (%)	Boy's opinion of girls' body (%)
1. Breasts		
Large	81	74
Medium	12	21
Small	7	5
2. Waist		
Slim	92	96
Round	8	4
Heavy	None	None
3. Hips		
Heavy	62	83
Round	28	16
Short	10	1
4. Legs		
Long	96	98
Short	4	2
5. Skin tone		
Fair	100	100
Medium	None	None
Dark	None	None

6. Height		
150-157 cm	None	None
158-162 cm	12	6
164 cm and above	88	94

CONCLUSION

The beauty standards in modern era are so messed up that they do not correlate with health instead they stand on obtaining a perfect physique. Models in the commercials, actors in tv shows and influencers on social media puts unreasonable expectations on how the person with proper body shape should look like. People posting their absolute workout stories that others start to feel like they will never be able to even come close to the images of those who have perfect abs and glutes.

In contemplation of achieving the ideal body type, both male and female respondents of ectomorphic, endomorphic and mesomorphic body types manifested that they put in a lot of efforts. They regularly attend gym classes and has developed eating disorders to obtain a socially acceptable physique. Schools, colleges and media need to make intervention through programs to specifically address the body image issue and its relation with cognitive- behavioural construct, mental health and eating dysfunctions in youngsters. Body image interventions would be helpful to contribute adolescents' wellness in psychological, physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. Active part has to be taken by community, family, and parents to build self-confidence, courage to resist both external and internal pressure about negative perceptions and provide support to raise their self-esteem.

In nutshell, the percentage of body dissatisfaction is high among young adults. Both males and females were equally dissatisfied with their bodies. Body image disturbances deliberately affected the self-worth of youngsters.

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